

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

- 1 1. A method of processing tobacco dust which
- 2 develops in the course of the making of tobacco-contain-
- 3 ing products, comprising the steps of:
- 4 gathering the dust; and
- 5 processing gathered dust into particles having
- 6 sizes greater than the average size of dust.

1 2. The method of claim 1, wherein said processing
2 step includes extruding gathered dust.

1 3. The method of claim 1, wherein said processing
2 step includes agglomerating gathered dust into said
3 particles.

1 4. The method of claim 3, wherein said agglome-
2 rating step includes compacting gathered dust.

1 5. The method of claim 1, further comprising the
2 steps of monitoring the sizes of the particles, and
3 comminuting the particles having sizes greater than a
4 predetermined size.

1 6. The method of claim 5, wherein the processing
2 step includes processing gathered dust into particles
3 constituting granules of agglomerated dust.

1 7. The method of claim 1, further comprising the
2 steps of making a rod-like tobacco filler, and embedding
3 the particles in the filler.

1 8. The method of claim 7, wherein said step of
2 making the filler includes sifting a mixture of tobacco
3 fragments, said embedding step including admixing the
4 particles to the mixture upon completion of said sifting
5 step.

1 9. The method of claim 8, wherein the mixture
2 contains fragments of tobacco ribs and said sifting step
3 includes segregating the fragments of tobacco ribs from
4 the mixture.

1 10. The method of claim 8, further comprising
2 the step of converting the sifted mixture into a moving
3 stream and said embedding step including admixing the
4 particles to the stream.

1 11. The method of claim 10, wherein said stream
2 is a shower.

1 12. The method of claim 10, wherein said admixing
2 step includes admitting to successive increments of the
3 moving stream metered quantities of particles.

1 13. The method of claim 7, further comprising
2 the step of monitoring the density of the filler and
3 said embedding step includes introducing the particles
4 into the filler at a rate which is a function of
5 monitored density of the filler.

1 14. The method of claim 7, wherein said embedding
2 step includes introducing the particles into the filler
3 at a predetermined rate.

1 15. The method of claim 14, wherein said rate
2 is a gradually variable rate.

1 16. Apparatus for processing tobacco dust which
2 develops in the course of the making of tobacco-contain-
3 ing products, comprising;
4 means for gathering the dust; and
5 means for processing gathered dust into particles
6 having sizes greater than the average size of dust.

1 17. The apparatus of claim 16, wherein said means
2 for processing gathered dust includes means for agglome-
3 rating tobacco dust into particles.

1 18. The apparatus of claim 17, wherein said ag-
2 glomerating means includes means for converting dust
3 into particles with the application of pressure.

1 19. The apparatus of claim 17, further comprising
2 means for comminuting at least the particles having
3 sizes exceeding a predetermined size.

1 20. A machine for making smokers' products, com-
2 prising:

3 means for establishing a supply of comminuted
4 smokable material including tobacco dust;

5 means for segregating the dust from the supply
6 and for gathering the segregated dust into tobacco-
7 containing particles;

8 means for converting the dedusted supply into
9 smokers' products; and

10 means for admitting the particles to the dedusted
11 supply.

1 21. The machine of claim 20, wherein said
2 converting means comprises means for advancing a stream
3 of dedusted supply in a predetermined direction along
4 a predetermined path, said means for admitting including
5 means for supplying the particles into a predetermined
6 portion of said path.

1 22. The machine of claim 21, wherein said
2 converting means further comprises means for sifting
3 the stream in a second portion of said path upstream
4 of said predetermined portion.

1 23. The machine of claim 21, wherein said
2 admitting means includes means for supplying metered
3 quantities of particles into said predetermined portion
4 of said path.